

***Carex scirpoidea* var. *scirpoidea* (Michx.)**

Canadian single-spike sedge

Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G5T4T5S2

General Description: Stems 4 to 16 in. (10 to 40 cm) tall. Rhizomatous sedge with conspicuous, often purplish, basal leaves that are reduced to scales. The flowering stems arise from the current year's shoots. The spike is usually solitary and either male or female (dioecious). The perigynia are hairy, short, and broad with a short beak. The perigynial scales are dark with pale margins. The achenes are three-sided.

Identification Tips: As with all sedges, positive identification requires the use of a technical key. This variety is distinctly aphyllopodic (the lowermost leaves are reduced to scales) as compared to the other varieties, which may have leaves that are reduced and scale-like or leaves that are well developed and regular. The persistent and conspicuous basal scale leaves of var. *scirpoidea* are helpful in distinguishing this variety from the others. The more common variety in Washington is *Carex scirpoidea* var. *stenochlaena*, which has relatively long, narrow perigynia. Another common variety in Washington is *Carex scirpoidea* var. *pseudoscirpoidea*, which has degenerated basal scale leaves that cannot be distinguished individually.

Phenology: Flowers from June to August.

Range: The taxon is circumboreal, extending south in the Sierras and the Rockies. This variety is common over most of the range, occurring in northwestern Montana and adjacent Alberta, and west to the Selkirk Mountains of British Columbia. In Washington, this taxon is peripheral in Okanogan, Jefferson, Mason and Whatcom counties.

Habitat: *Carex scirpoidea* var. *scirpoidea* occurs in moist meadows, streambanks, and open rocky slopes in the mountains, often above timberline at 5900-7400 feet (1800-2250 m). This variety is usually found in moister habitats than *Carex scirpoidea* var. *pseudoscirpoidea* and sometimes at lower elevations. The taxon is the common variety over most of its range but gives way to vars. *stenochlaena* and *pseudoscirpoidea* within their respective ranges.

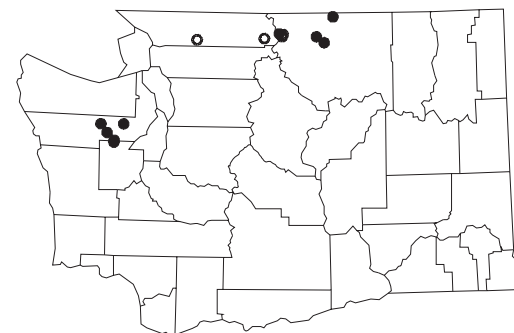
Carex scirpoidea* var. *scirpoidea

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Known distribution of
Carex scirpoidea
var. *scirpoidea*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Photo by Peter Zika



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Ecology: The taxon is usually found near alpine meadows and streams in patches of vegetation below the summit. It appears to prefer thin, rocky soils and talus slopes and is generally surrounded by boulders, ridges, snowfields, and scree slopes.

State Status Comments: This taxon is more common to the north, and the Washington populations are at the southern edge of its range.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed in Washington.

Threats and Management Concerns: Grazing and herbicides are potential threats.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1964. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams Gymnosperms and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 914 pp.

Washington Natural Heritage Program. 1981. *An Illustrated Guide to the Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Vascular Plants of Washington*. Washington State Department of Natural Resources. 328 pp.